

## SLPI INFORMATION #2: WHAT IS THE SLPI RATING SCALE?

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The Sign Language Proficiency Interview (SLPI) Rating Scale is a standard scale for rating sign language communication skills that is based on highly skilled, knowledgeable native-like signers. Since each SLPI interviewee's performance is compared to this standard scale, not other interviewees, the SLPI is a criterion referenced test. Also, since the upper anchor for the SLPI Rating Scale is based on skilled native-like signers, the SLPI Rating Scale may be applied to all natural sign languages. For further discussion of this see SLPI PAPER #3, *What Does the SLPI Assess?*

As discussed in Newell, Caccamise, Boardman, and Holcomb (1983) and SLPI PAPER #4, *SLPI-SCPI-SLPI History*, the SLPI has been adapted from the Language/Oral Proficiency Interview (L/OPI), an assessment tool that is designed to assess spoken language skills in second languages. Since the L/OPI was developed by the US federal government to assess current and potential government employees' spoken language communication skills for foreign languages, the original L/OPI rating scale, the US Government Defense Language Institute (DLI) L/OPI Rating Scale, was more sensitive at higher spoken language communication skill levels than lower skill levels. Subsequent to the development and application of the L/OPI to foreign services assessment needs, interest grew for applying this assessment technique within academic settings. The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language (ACTFL) secured two U. S. Department of Education grants and, in collaboration with Educational Testing Service (ETS) of Princeton, New Jersey, developed an L/OPI scale for use in academic settings. This new scale was labeled the ACTFL/ETS L/OPI Rating Scale. Since foreign language instruction generally results in skills at the lower spoken communication language skill levels, the ACTFL/ETS L/OPI Rating Scale was constructed to be more sensitive at these lower spoken language communication skill levels and less sensitive at the higher skill levels than the DLI L/OPI Rating Scale (Liskin-Gasparro, 1982).

Given that the SLPI was projected to be used with both people who are native signers and with people who are learning a sign language as a second language, it was determined that the SLPI Rating Scale would need to be sensitive to the full range of possible sign language skills from very low, beginning skills through native-like sign language communication skills. Therefore, the SLPI Rating Scale, as shown on the next page, includes eleven rating skills levels that cover a wide range of sign language skills from No Functional Skills (low beginning sign language skills) at the low end of the scale up to Superior Plus (native-like skills) at the top end of the scale. Each rating level has both a functional sign language communication descriptor and linguistic form descriptors. The functional descriptors identify the highest levels at which interviewees are able to use sign language for communication and the form descriptors identify interviewees' sign language vocabulary, production, fluency, grammar, and comprehension skills.

### References

- Liskin-Gasparro, J. (Ed.) (1982). *Foreign Language & Proficiency Assessment*. Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service.
- Newell, W., Caccamise, F., Boardman, K., & Holcomb, B. R. (1983). Adaptation of the Language Proficiency Interview (LPI) for assessing sign communicative competence. *Sign Language Studies*, 41, 311-352.

SIGN LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY INTERVIEW (SLPI) RATING SCALE<sup>a,b</sup>

<u>RATINGS</u>	<u>DESCRIPTORS<sup>c</sup></u>
<u>Superior Plus</u>	<b>Able to have a fully shared and natural conversation, with in-depth elaboration for both social and work topics.</b> All aspects of signing are native-like.
<u>Superior</u>	<b>Able to have a fully shared conversation, with in-depth elaboration for both social and work topics.</b> Very broad sign language vocabulary, near native-like production and fluency, excellent use of sign language grammatical features, and excellent comprehension for normal signing rate.
<u>Advanced Plus</u>	Exhibits some superior level skills, but not <u>all</u> and not <u>consistently</u> .
<u>Advanced</u>	<b>Able to have a generally shared conversation with good, spontaneous elaboration for both social and work topics.</b> Broad sign language vocabulary knowledge and clear, accurate production of signs and fingerspelling at a normal/near-normal rate; occasional misproductions do not detract from conversational flow. Good use of many sign language grammatical features and comprehension good for normal signing rate.
<u>Intermediate Plus</u>	Exhibits some advanced level skills, but not all and not consistently.
<u>Intermediate</u>	<b>Able to discuss with some confidence routine social and work topics within a conversational format with some elaboration; generally 3-to-5 sentences.</b> Good knowledge and control of everyday/basic sign language vocabulary with some sign vocabulary errors. Fairly clear signing at a moderate signing rate with some sign misproductions. Fair use of some sign language grammatical features and fairly good comprehension for a moderate-to-normal signing rate; a few repetitions and rephrasing of questions may be needed.
<u>Survival Plus</u>	Exhibits some intermediate level skills, but not <u>all</u> and not <u>consistently</u> .
<u>Survival</u>	<b>Able to discuss basic social and work topics with responses generally 1-to-3 sentences in length.</b> Some knowledge of basic sign language vocabulary with many sign vocabulary and/or sign production errors. Slow-to-moderate signing rate. Basic use of a few sign language grammatical features. Fair comprehension for signing produced at a slow-to-moderate rate with some repetition and rephrasing.
<u>Novice Plus</u>	Exhibits some survival level skills, but not <u>all</u> and not <u>consistently</u> .
<u>Novice</u>	<b>Able to provide single sign and some short phrase/sentence responses to basic questions signed at a slow-to-moderate rate with frequent repetition and rephrasing.</b> Vocabulary primarily related to everyday work and/or social areas such as basic work-related signs, family members, basic objects, colors, numbers, names of weekdays, and time. Production and fluency characterized by many sign production errors and by a slow rate with frequent inappropriate pauses/hesitations.
<u>No Functional Skills</u>	<b>(May be) Able to provide short single sign and “primarily” fingerspelled responses to some basic questions signed at a slow rate with extensive repetition and rephrasing.</b>

<sup>a</sup>Adapted from US Foreign Service Institute AND ACTFL LPI Rating Scales by William Newell and Frank Caccamise

<sup>b</sup>The SLPI was referred to as the Sign Communication Proficiency Interview (SCPI) from 1983 to May 2006.

<sup>c</sup>For all SLPI rating descriptors, **first statement (in bold type) always a statement of ASL communicative functioning**, with all remaining statements (regular type) descriptors of ASL form (vocabulary, production, fluency, grammar, and comprehension).